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EUR/CE TOM YEAGER, USDOC/ITA HILLEARY SMITH

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [USTR](#) [BEXP](#) [SI](#)  
SUBJECT: SLOVENE HEALTH MINISTER DISCUSSES PUBLIC PRIVATE  
PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC TENDERS

Classified By: Ambassador Yousif B. Ghafari for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

Summary  
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¶1. (SBU) Slovene Health Minister Zofija Mazej Kukovic shared a vision of using public private partnerships (PPPs) to fund specialty clinics throughout Slovenia during a July 7 meeting with the Ambassador. She stated that although Slovenians are afraid of the U.S. health care system, Slovenia could learn a lot from the U.S. on how to implement successful PPPs. When pressed by the Ambassador, she stated unequivocally that she believed Health Ministry public tenders to be completely transparent and unbiased. End Summary.

Interested in Public Private Partnerships  
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¶2. (U) Slovene Health Minister Kukovic explained to the Ambassador during their meeting that public private partnerships (PPPs) would be essential for developing a network of specialty clinics throughout Slovenia. Although she claimed that Slovenians do not support the U.S. health care system, believing that the U.S. system does not have enough social protections in place, she noted that the U.S. has effectively implemented PPPs. She added that Slovenia could benefit from studying our models. The Ambassador highlighted Michigan's Karmanos Cancer Institute as one such model of government funding supplemented by private sector support. Kukovic did not believe that Slovenia's lack of tax incentives for charitable giving would hinder PPP development.

Ambassador Presses For Transparency  
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¶3. (SBU) When the Ambassador raised concerns brought to Post's attention by U.S. companies regarding the lack of transparency in public tenders for medical equipment, Kukovic responded that Slovenia must "take the best from all opportunities" and that American businesses must aggressively sell their products and not rest on past successes. (Note. On July 2 the Rector of the University of Ljubljana, a physician by background, told the Ambassador that she thought that there was an EU directive requiring member states to buy equipment from European companies. End Note) When he raised a May article in the newspaper Finance about accusations that the Health Ministry was giving preferential treatment behind the scenes to Slovenian company Interexport, representing German Agfa, Kukovic assured the Ambassador that the Health Ministry's process is completely unbiased. The Ambassador also pressed for a response to his June 26 letter in support of transparent and objective treatment for U.S. pharmaceutical companies providing innovative medicines in Slovenia. The Minister denied having received the letter and was unable to provide a response. (Note. Post sent Kukovic another copy of the letter. End Note)

Comment

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14. (C) Prime Minister Janez Jansa brought Kukovic in for her management skills in reaction to problems with the Oncology Institute and the Pediatric Clinic. She does not seem to be aware of many of the day-to-day activities at the Health Ministry. Kukovic is the first Health Minister without a medical background; she was previously the director of successful Slovenian engineering company Esotech. Kukovic seems to be focused on vague post-election plans, stating "if we win the next election we will develop a plan to raise the total quality of the health system."  
GHAFARI